

[River Town Life]

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Beliefs and customs — Sketches

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Title River town life

Place of origin Portland, Oregon Date 3/28/39

Project worker Manly M. Banister

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Manly M. Banister Date Mar 28, 1939

Address 2071 S. W. Park Ave., Portland, Oregon

Subject River town Life

Name and address of informant Mr. Joseph Brough

Treves Hotel, 11th and Stark Streets, Portland

Date and time of interview March 28, A.M.

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Place of interview Treves Hotel

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Mrs. Belle Veatch, Rainier, Oregon

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None

Description of rooms house, surroundings, etc.

The hotel in which Mr. Brough lives is situated about two blocks from the Elks Building on Eleventh Street. The informant occupies a single room, very clean and neat and hung with nifty pictures, illustrating from left to right, the acme of nudity in white skin. The place in representation of a Chinese Paradise, with a very choice specimen of Indian extraction, clothed with a feather in her hair. Very soothing. ?

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Treves Hotel, Portland

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
 2. Place and date of birth
 3. Family
 4. Places lived in, with dates
 5. Education, with dates
 6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
 7. Special skills and interests
 8. Community and religious activities
 9. Description of informant
 10. Other points gained in interview
1. French-Canadian
 2. Born in Michigan, Sept 12, 1879.
 3. None
 4. Came West in '89, lived in Rainier subsequently, and all up and down the Columbia region of Oregon and Washington.

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5. Education: 1 year of schooling at Castle Rock, and 2 years following in Rainier. Went to work at age of 12.

6. Was a logger, greased skids to begin. First kid that ever sold newspapers in Castle Rock. Carried shoeshine kit until 25. Worked for S. P. [& ?] S. Railroad. Now conductor on freight trains for same line.

7. 8. 9. Mr. Brough is a very large man with a bluff dameanor but of jolly disposition. He looks French-Canadian, as he is.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Name and address of informant Mr. Joseph Brough

Treves Hotel, Portland, Oregon

Text:

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There were only two of us (dance callers) on the river in the nineties who could call the “lancers” or changes. I did quite a bit of it—just about every Saturday night. Where were a number of different calls and I will have to do a lot of tall remembering. I used to call for what we called the “whorehouse dance” in those days. It was a waltz—something like the shimmy nowadays.

[When?] I was twelve years old I went to work in a logging camp greasing skids behind a bull team. I remember the fellows used to send me for foolish things if they could, but sometimes I was wise. Like when they sent me into town for a meat-augur. That was at about two o'clock in the afternoon, so I just took the rest of the day off and let them think I was hunting. But I bit all right when I was sent after a “cross-haul”—that's where two skidroads come together and cross each other.

Then I went to work in a sawmill and sawed ties for the A & C road, from Goble to Astoria. I also worked an the grade driving mules for that outfit...and lice! I certainly got lousy in one of those road camps.

But about those dance calls, there was one call went like this: 2 First couple lead to right, Birdie in the cage... Three hands 'round... Birdie hop out, crow hop in, Three hands 'round.

You say that to the first couple while they go through the motions, then lead on to the next couple until all four couples had got through. Then there was another quadrille change that went like this: Honors to the right, Honors to the left, Swing left hand lady, And all promenade.

This one was sung while the first was shouted or chanted. Every other dance was a quadrille in those days. The only dances we had were the quadrille, round dance, Schottische, and polka.

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In '98 it was the vogue to wear high collars of linen or celluloid. They say the Weeses came out here with only a celluloid collar among them, but they are certainly well fixed now, from money they made in the logging business.

For music at the dances, there was generally a couple of violins. Sometimes there was an organ, if anybody in the neighborhood owned one and they could borrow it. They played the ordinary popular music of those days.

I remember once another lad and myself went down to a hopyard dance at Olequa where a bunch of Indians had got together. Well, they asked us to call for them, but I wouldn't do it. This friend of mine stepped up and said, "All right, I'll call you a dance," and he started out:

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"Your bucks in the middle, Four squaws outside,

The remainder of the rhyme is unprintable but was in terms clearly understood by the Indians. Boy, we lit out of there right now, with that whole band of Indians after us. They were plenty mad.

I used to fish down the river near Pillar Rock, Washington, and I remember once they had an Indian funeral. In all that district they could only find one white man who could read enough to read something out of the Bible, and it wasn't me. I didn't learn anything until I taught it to myself after I was twenty-one.

They had lots of camp meetings those days, too. After the preaching, there would be a dance, and this usually broke up in picked fights—no gang stuff, it was man to man. It was what passed for fun at that time.

Form D

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Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Treves Hotel, Portland

Comment:

Mr. Brough is quite willing to help, but somehow he says he can't seem to get his remembering to work, because it was all a long time ago. However, he says if he remembers anything he may think worth while, he will jot it down and bring it into the office.

He gave me the following name of a retired Switchman of the SP&S for possible railroad material:

Dan C. Cummings

2321 S. E. Franklin

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(Address from City Directory)